

★ **OUR 500th ISSUE!** ★

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A large, stylized '25th' in a metallic, 3D font. The '2' and '5' are connected. A red banner with the word 'ANNIVERSARY' in white capital letters is draped across the bottom of the '25'. To the right of the banner, the years '1974' and '1999' are stacked in a bold, sans-serif font. The background features a yellow and black oval design.

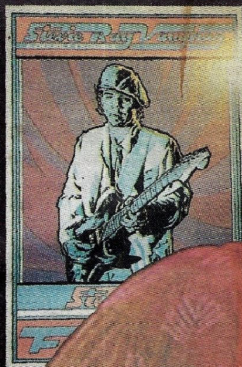
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EARLY SRV POSTERS

Stevie Ray Vaughan (slight return)



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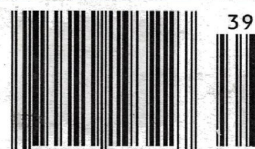
Jimmie Vaughan

Blazing his own blues trail

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Ain't Gone 'N' Give Up On Love

Remembering Stevie Ray Vaughan

by Alexander Shashko

For an immortal, Stevie Ray Vaughan knew human frailty all too well. Even on stage, when his powerful hands and forearms wielded a guitar like few before or since, he struck a delicate pose. His shoulders slouched and his head tilted downward when he played. For a long time, he couldn't look at the audience, hiding behind his trademark wide-brimmed hats. Unlike the other guitar gods of the '80s, whose spread-leg posturing typified the era, Vaughan leaned backwards or gently cradled his instrument. Sweat dripped from his brow relentlessly. He seemed exhausted and vulnerable from the moment he took the stage until the gig was over.

For Vaughan, the guitar was never about machismo or stardom. The guitar was his obsession, the blues his passion. To emulate his idols, blues legends such as Albert King and Buddy Guy, required total devotion, a devotion he gave freely to blues guitar from the age of nine.

In time, Vaughan would become one of the finest guitarists of his generation, barnstorming arenas with his unique sound, equal parts King and Jimi Hendrix with touches of everyone from Guy to Jeff Beck thrown in. His stunning ability revitalized blues-rock and brought passion to an '80s music scene dominated by frothy synth-pop. Even after his death nine years ago in a tragic plane accident, Vaughan's popularity endures. His albums continue to sell steadily, and his influence resonates in young guitar players such as Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Jonny Lang.

Unfortunately, Vaughan had another obsession that intertwined with his love for the blues. Although he avoided clichéd histrionics on stage, he embraced the destructive trappings of his profession — the late nights, drugs and women — with a manic energy matched only by his devotion to his music. For a long time his lifestyle and music were inseparable. The former was necessary to understand the latter, Vaughan reasoned, both part of the bluesman's code.

But playing the blues ain't the same as living the blues. The opposite comes closer to the truth: To play the blues is to avoid, or at least endure, living the blues.

"Blues do not promise that people will not be unhappy," the African-American essayist Gerald Early writes, "but that unhappiness can be transcended, by faith in one's own ability to accept unhappiness without ever conceding oneself to it." Actively living the blues, creating a world of "brutal experience" as novelist Ralph Ellison put it, is to deny faith in yourself, to give in to the darkest notions of reality.

The tragedy of Vaughan's life was that at the very time he was trying to master blues music, he was living the blues to perfection. The obsessiveness that was his strength as a musician hurt him as a person. But Vaughan's triumph was equally dramatic: In time, he understood that his blues-playing days would not survive his blues life. When he finally staked out his future, he chose to endure, embracing the call for survival through the music he loved.

Vaughan was born on Oct. 3, 1954, in Dallas, Texas to Jim and Martha Vaughan. Big Jim was the son of a sharecropper who, after serving in World War II at the age of

16, held a series of jobs culminating in steady employment as an asbestos worker. Martha was a Dallas native who worked as a secretary for a lumber company. They met in 1949, when Martha pulled into the convenience store where Jim was working. He found the nerve to ask her out, and she said yes. They were married a year later.

Vaughan had an older brother, Jimmie, who was three years old when Stevie was born. Growing up in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas, a racially-mixed, working-class community, the young boys were surrounded by music. Their parents were avid fans who went to dance halls as often as they could — so often that members of the legendary western swing band Bob Wills And The Texas Playboys often hung around their house.

"Every once in a while," Vaughan recalled, "there'd be, 'Hey Jim, Steve. Come out here and show them what you can do.' We'd be little bitty midgets running around with guitars that were this big, 'trying to play.' By grade school, Jimmie was pulling the younger Vaughan into the wider world of Texas blues and rockabilly.

The guitar entered Vaughan's life when he

often found himself lost in his older brother's shadows. Jimmie was devoted to the blues and always looked cool. Said Vaughan: "It didn't seem like [Jimmie] was doing it to get out there and make money. It has more to do with what he really liked and what he really cared about, and that to me meant listening to your heart."

Devotion to the music had a price, however. Once again Jimmie led the way. As the boys entered their late teens, they frequented an Austin music scene filled with great music but also copious amounts of drugs, alcohol and sex. Jimmie's relationship with his parents deteriorated. His father was especially upset when Jimmie dropped out of high school so he could keep his long hair. Tales of drunken carousing made their way home. Jimmie finally moved out of the house in 1967, at age 16.

Like Jimmie, Stevie became increasingly immersed in drugs and alcohol. Often asleep in the back of class after late-night gigs, always harassed about his looks and regularly getting bad grades, Vaughan was convinced that school was useless. He quit in 1972 and moved to Austin to play music full time. In Austin, according to Vaughan,

"I got my first guitar on my birthday in '61. It was a Roy Rodgers made out of masonite with the little stencils on it. It wouldn't tune, so we took half the strings off and made it into a bass. I played bass behind my brother Jimmie."
— Stevie Ray Vaughan

turned seven. "As far as I can remember," Vaughan told *Musician* magazine, "I got my first guitar on my birthday in '61. It was a Roy Rodgers made out of masonite with the little stencils on it. It wouldn't tune, so we took half the strings off and made it into a bass. I played bass behind my brother Jimmie." Jimmie's passionate devotion to the guitar pulled Vaughan even further into the music.

"I saw how hard he worked at it, how much fun he was having doing it, and how good he was. Within a couple of years he was the hottest guitar player around." Jimmie quickly became one of Vaughan's biggest influences, not just for his playing and lifestyle, but also for the records he was bringing into their home. Anything with a guitar on it was game, and before long their record collection read like a who's who of guitar greats: Chuck Berry, B.B. King, Guy, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, T-Bone Walker, Kenny Burrell, Dick Dale, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters.

The Vaughan brothers threw themselves into their music. "I played [guitar] on the curb, on the porch, in my room or walking down the street," said Vaughan. "And if I didn't have my guitar with me, I'd either want it or was taking a break." Both joined local combos in their teens, with Jimmie establishing himself first as one of Dallas' best guitar players. Compared to Jimmie's good looks, swagger and drive, Vaughan

"It was like a circus. The first time I came down here, I couldn't believe it. There were real, full-blown hippies. People were just walking around acting strange, looking strange. I was trying to figure out, 'Hey, what's happening here?... Where are the police?'"

The Vaughan brothers spent the '70s in Austin honing their craft. Like most musicians in Austin, they wound their way in and out of bands with names like The Nightcrawlers and Cobras (for a detailed rundown, see either noteworthy Vaughan biography, *Stevie Ray Vaughan: Caught In The Crossfire* by Joe Nick Patoski and Bill Crawford, or *Stevie Ray: Soul To Soul* by Keri Leigh).

"The whole scene in Austin was when someone needed a fresh bit of energy in their band — kind of like every three to six months, something like that," said Vaughan, "all the bands would just shuffle the cards of players. Everybody learned a whole lot, and eventually everybody found slots with other musicians that they really wanted to stay with."

But regardless of his gig, Vaughan was quietly supplanting his older brother as the finest Vaughan guitarist in town.

In 1976, he formed his own band, the Triple Threat Revue. By the end of the '70s, Triple Threat was history.

"Ooh, that was a mess," Vaughan recounted. "Everybody wanted to be the

leader at once." Double Trouble, taking its name from an Otis Rush song, was born. Vaughan stepped forward to take on singing chores in addition to lead guitar and Chris Layton was retained from Triple Threat as drummer. Tommy Shannon, Johnny Winter's former bassist, joined a year later.

As early as 1973, Vaughan started shooting dangerous amounts of speed. Friends and bandmates voiced their concerns, but they fell on deaf ears. After all, his playing was getting better. His good-natured, innocent personality inoculated him from angering those friends who might otherwise make Vaughan face his demons. Furthermore, drugs and alcohol seemed inseparable from the life Vaughan chose to lead. They were part of the musician's world, he believed, a muse to sustain and inspire one more night on the road, one more set, one more perfect lick. It would be many years, and a lot of pain, before Vaughan's assumptions were shattered.

In 1979, Vaughan married Lenora (Lenny) Baily between sets at the Rome Inn in Austin. While marriage might have calmed Vaughan's wild lifestyle, the opposite was true. The former wife of a drug dealer,

Lenny now acquired drugs for Vaughan. While the two were undeniably in love, they were also co-dependents.

Still, it seemed nothing could stop Vaughan's musical ascent. Double Trouble quickly established itself as the best Texas blues band in Austin, but it took until 1982 for the band to finally get their break. The band's manager, Chesley Millikin, had passed along a videotape of the band to his former employer, Mick Jagger. Eventually, the tape fell into the hands of Charlie Watts, who immediately requested that Double Trouble play at a private party at New York's Danceteria as a tryout for The Rolling Stones' record label. Although the band wasn't chosen — The Stones didn't really want to sign a blues band — Vaughan wowed the celebrity audience.

"Yeah, well, they liked it all right!" Vaughan said. "We were supposed to play 30 minutes, but every time we were going to stop, they were yelling for us to keep on, screaming, 'We'll buy the whole goddamn club if we have to!'"

The show got a rave review in *The New York Times*, and a picture of Vaughan and Jagger made *Rolling Stone*.

Before they had time to capitalize on the Danceteria show, the band landed a two-night stand at the April 1982 Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. They played a blistering set that caught the attention of David Bowie, who had been in the audience. After

the performance, Bowie stopped by to chat and impressed Vaughan with his intimate knowledge of Texas blues. By late summer, Bowie had asked Vaughan to play on his new album. It was an odd mix, of course, the gender-bending, trend-conscious Bowie and homespun bluesman Vaughan. But if that's what Bowie wanted, Vaughan was happy to oblige.

The result was *Let's Dance*, Bowie's most commercially accessible and successful album. Vaughan played on six of the tracks, providing the hook to "China Girl" and a blistering solo on "Cat People (Putting Out Fire)." Vaughan's playing on "Let's Dance" led Albert King to jokingly accuse him of "doin' all my shit on there." Coproduced by former Chic guitarist Nile Rodgers, who would later collaborate with the Vaughan brothers on their 1990 *Family Style* album, *Let's Dance* chugged along with just enough boogie — five million copies worth, to be exact — to make Vaughan's presence meaningful. His name swirled around New York music circles for the second time in a year.

The second night at Montreux, Double Trouble caught the attention of singer Jackson Browne, who loved the band so much that he offered his recording studio to the band free of charge. It was an offer the band eventually accepted. But they still had a problem: For all the buzz about Vaughan, the band still didn't have a record contract. In fact, they were the first band to play Montreux without one.

That soon changed. Guitarist John Paul Hammond returned to the United States from Switzerland with a gift for his father, the legendary talent scout and record producer John Hammond: A videotape of Stevie Ray Vaughan And Double Trouble. Hammond fell in love and soon added another star to the constellation of musical giants he had discovered during his career, a group that includes Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen.

Said Hammond: "[Vaughan] brought back a style that had died, and he brought it back at exactly the right time. The young ears haven't heard anything with this kind of sound."

Hammond and Vaughan struck up a friendship, and eventually Double Trouble took the master tracks for their first album from Browne's Southern California enclave to Hammond's Media Sound Studio in Manhattan. Hammond remixed the record, then shopped around the finished product relentlessly. Though roots-rock was selling poorly at the time, Epic Records signed Stevie Ray Vaughan And Double Trouble to a long-term record deal.

At that point, Vaughan made the decision to abandon a lucrative spot on Bowie's *Let's Dance* tour and concentrate on Double Trouble full time.

"I couldn't gear everything on something I didn't really care a whole lot about," said Vaughan. "I just didn't have any good reason to leave [Double Trouble]. It was kind of risky, but I really didn't need all the headaches. We really thought we had something going with our album."

Vaughan was right. When *Texas Flood* was finally released in 1983, it entered a marketplace dominated by heavily produced pop; it was the year of Michael Jackson, and

The Express



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the rock charts were filled with the likes of Def Leppard, Bryan Adams, and Journey. Almost immediately, the album hit a nerve, climbing to number #38 on the charts and ultimately selling more than a million copies. *Guitar Player* magazine's readers awarded Vaughan Best Electric Blues Player and Best New Talent. The album was named Best Guitar Album. It was the first time anyone had won three prizes since Jeff Beck in 1976. Vaughan would win Best Electric Blues Player for every remaining year of his life save one.

Texas Flood defined Vaughan's sound, a raw blues trio propelled by his gritty voice and thick, soulful guitar playing. The album provided an outlet for a blues-rock audience increasingly crowded out by the record industry. Given the musical climate, not to mention the quality of the record, it's not surprising that many fans still consider *Texas Flood* their favorite Double Trouble album.

Sure enough, as Hammond predicted, the album was a revelation for many music fans too young to remember the blues-rock of the late '60s. The core of the album consisted of Vaughan's covers of the blues artists he'd honed his style on, such as Guy's "Mary Had A Little Lamb." Unlike many white blues artists, Vaughan came up with at least two originals — "Love Struck Baby's" party-warming boogie and the buoyant groove of the radio hit "Pride And Joy" — that matched the cover songs.

"I really enjoyed making *Texas Flood*... It was mostly just us three, focused on what we do best. It took us about three days," said Vaughan. These blues shuffles provided maximum opportunity for showcasing Vaughan's guitar virtuosity. But *Texas Flood* also hinted at some of the directions Vaughan would turn later in his career. He covered George Clinton's "Testify" and show-boated until even the P-Funk crowd would have smiled. "Lenny," an instrumental blues number, hinted at the moody soul jazz excursions his untrained ear would take throughout the course of his career.

The follow-up to *Texas Flood*, 1984's *Couldn't Stand The Weather*, equalled Vaughan's debut with a strong batch of songs and even tougher playing. "Scuttle Buttin'" introduced the album in rollicking terms, matching "Love Struck Baby" and cementing Double Trouble's penchant for opening their albums with flat-out party anthems. The title cut was Vaughan's own composition, a funky, sophisticated number featuring his brother Jimmie on guitar. "Cold Shot" burned hot and sultry, recalling Peggy Lee's "Fever" and countless grinding blues ballads. As with "Lenny," Vaughan displayed a soft touch unimaginable for most of his axe-wielding contemporaries, this time on the haunting "Tin Pan Alley" — recorded in one take — and the jazzy album-closer, "Sang's Swang."

But the centerpiece of the album was indisputably Vaughan's cover of Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)." Vaughan's obsession with Hendrix was no secret. He played it up himself, adopting many of Hendrix' guitar techniques, covering his songs, even appearing once at a party dressed and performing as Jimi.

"I just thought he was the greatest thing I'd ever seen," Vaughan said. In an interview with *Billboard* editor Timothy White, he added, "Listen to 'The Star Spangled Banner

— if that's not where people got the idea to try and go for synthesizer sounds, I'm not sure where it would be from. Imagine what that's opened up for everyone! I think he just continued to try and take things further, and he wasn't afraid of talking about spiritual things in his songs and trying to grow. Even though we sometimes defeat our own purposes by our lifestyles...."

Vaughan's "Voodoo Chile" drew mixed reviews, prompting his heated response in an interview with Jeff Fahey: "Some of the distance that people put between playing music and playing Hendrix's music is kind of strange to me. Why isn't it just as accessible as Chuck Berry or B.B. King or Albert King or Bo Diddley? Granted, it's hard to play and there's a lot to it. There's a lot to understanding what he's doing, and I don't even begin to know how he did some of the things he did, but that doesn't mean I shouldn't try."

In another interview he added that he'd probably put a Hendrix track on every future album just to drive people crazy.

Couldn't Stand The Weather averted the sophomore jinx. It charted higher than *Texas Flood* at #31 and beat its predecessor to platinum status. Like *Texas Flood*, *Couldn't Stand The Weather* won Guitar Player's Best Guitar Album. Stevie Ray Vaughan And Double Trouble were nominated for four Grammy Awards and won Best Traditional Blues for the version of "Texas Flood" released on the *Blues Explosion Montreux '82* album. Above all, Vaughan was named Entertainer Of The Year and Blues Instrumentalist Of The Year at the Fifth Annual W.C. Handy Awards. It was the first time a white guitarist had won either category, and Vaughan was so moved by the honor that he flew in from his tour in Australia to accept it.

For all his artistic success, however, Vaughan was falling ever deeper into personal turmoil. At the Handy Awards, both B.B. King and Albert King pulled Vaughan aside to voice their concerns about his behavior. Their protests fell on deaf ears. The strains of constant touring were taking their toll, and Vaughan's drug use intensified. Cocaine replaced marijuana and heroin as the pharmaceutical of choice.

Wrote Patoski and Crawford in their biography: "It was a routine now, this strange world so out of perspective. Hotel rooms, guitars, tour buses, limos, dressing rooms, soundchecks, interviews, jets, shows, radio stations, handshakes, deli platters, charters, parties, Crown. Coke. Lots of it. Mounds of it. Sparkling piles of pretty powder. Go for days, if he wanted. Play. Keep going."

Vaughan's professional relationships started to suffer, and he clashed with his management. He and his wife Lenny grew apart, and she started interfering with Vaughan's management. A good friend, guitar producer Charley Wirtz, died of a burst aorta. And the recording sessions for their new album were a mess, drowning in alcohol and cocaine.

Given the circumstances, *Soul To Soul* was a remarkable achievement. Although the album received a lukewarm response from critics and fans (it did not sell as well as its predecessors, though it went gold), it



Stevie Ray Vaughan And Double Trouble: (from left) Tommy Shannon, Vaughan, Chris Layton and Reese Wynans.

marked a significant change in sound and themes for Vaughan. To this point, Double Trouble had been a very good Texas blues band with rock leanings. Now, much broader influences were coming to the fore: echoes of Stax Records, Ray Charles, and Jimmy Smith coursed through the music alongside Hendrix and Albert King. Certainly, the arrival of Reese Wynans as a regular keyboardist expanded the band's palette dramatically.

"There are a lot of rockin' songs" said Vaughan, "and then some like we've never played before. There's definitely blues in it, not less blues than before, but it's a type of music we haven't tried before... the moods are happier, more up, more open."

Still, you can't help wondering if Vaughan's embrace of "soul" — as an album concept and a musical form — at his time of greatest personal desperation was something more than simply an evolution in his music.

Although you'll kill yourself trying to differentiate between them, soul and the blues are not the same thing. Writer Clive Anderson distinguished soul music as a conglomeration of two distinct African-American musical traditions: "secularized gospel embracing blues profanity." Soul finds its power by drawing on the prescriptions of gospel music as a way of dealing with blues despair. As *Goldmine* writer Craig Werner puts it in his excellent new book, *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America*, "At its best, the gospel impulse helps people experience themselves in rela-

tion to rather than on their own. Gospel makes the feeling of human separateness, which is what the blues are all about, bearable.... If the blues give you the strength to face another day but leave you to face it on your own, gospel promises, or at least holds out the possibility, that tomorrow may be different, better."

This tension between Vaughan's blues isolation and his gospel cry for connection comes through repeatedly on *Soul To Soul*, although he doesn't seem to have thought it through in those terms. After the standard rollicking opener "Say What?" the album launched into one of two terrific tracks penned by Vaughan's longtime friend and sometime collaborator, Doyle Bramhall, "Looking Out The Window." Though Vaughan didn't write it, the song's bridge, "Lord I'm pickin' up the pieces off the shelf/Won't take long baby 'cause there's hardly any left," is as autobiographical as it gets, setting the stage for the rest of the album.

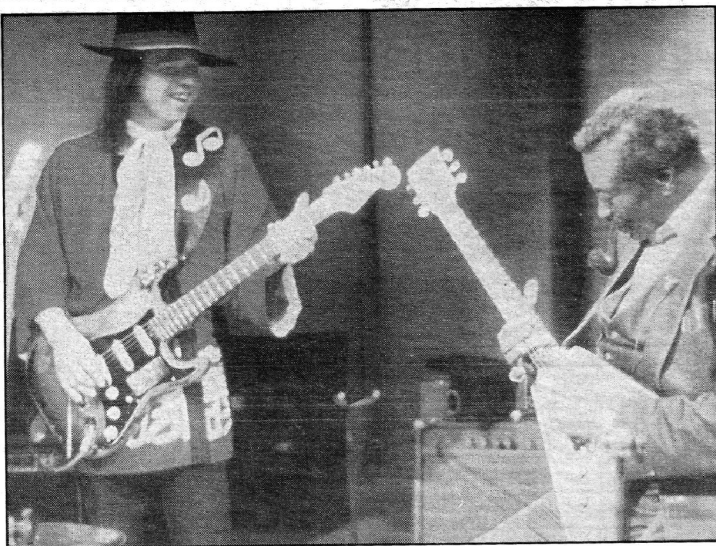
Written for lost friend Charley Wirtz, the poignant gospel-drenched ballad "Life Without You" ranks as one of the emotional highlights of Vaughan's career. "Angels have waited, for so long/Now they have their way/Take your place," Vaughan sings before launching into a searing solo. The song became a staple of Double Trouble's live shows, and eventually a platform for Vaughan to speak to his audience about the need for love in a dangerous world. But at

the time, many people feared that the song would prove autobiographical.

"Change It," grounded in Wynans' surging organ, turned Bramhall's second contribution to the album into a smoldering extension of "Looking Out The Window." "You can't change it/Can't rearrange it" the song begins, echoing the passivity of the protagonist in "Window." But as it progresses, it sounds a clear gospel theme. "Get away from the blind side of life" Vaughan growls repeatedly. By the end, the song has indeed changed, issuing a defiant challenge to the singer's love to move past the unhappiness of the present: "It's time we got movin'/Time to move on/Let's slide out the door/Glide our way home." Those aren't the words of a bluesman. They're part of a gospel tradition that runs from Mahalia Jackson's "Move On Up A Little Higher" to Curtis Mayfield's "Move On Up" believing in the possibility of redemption and change if one just keeps working at it.

But the album's emotional and musical heart was "Ain't Gone 'N' Give Up On Love." Drowning in a sea of drugs, exhausted by endless touring and promotion, and bickering with his friends and family, Vaughan had nearly bottomed out in 1985. All that was left, really, was his music, and it was in his music that he struggled with the heartache that filled his soul. Over a gorgeous organ straight from Muscle Shoals, with his plain-

(Please see Stevie Ray Vaughan page 26)



Stevie Ray Vaughan with other superstars. Clockwise from left: B.B. King, Lonnie Mack, Mick Jagger, and Jeff Beck.

(Stevie Ray Vaughan from page 20)

tive Albert King licks responding to each desperate call, Vaughan testifies "I ain't gone 'n' give up on love/Love won't give up on me." As if to prove that he's ready to be saved by a glory that still eludes him, Vaughan works through the blues reality. "Every tear that I've cried/Only washed away the fear inside" he pleads before assuring us that "Love will have its day."

But although Vaughan is close to deliverance, he still hasn't found emancipation by the song's end, just as he hadn't found it in life: "Every time I cry/Love just won't let me be/Won't set me free." It is Vaughan's most impassioned, if understated, performance to date. In fact, that understatement gives the song its power, the power of a single voice crying out to be heard from behind sinewy guitar. If *In Step* was Vaughan's recovery album, then *Soul To Soul* was as close as he ever got to recognizing his problems and finding ways to resolve them through his music.

In 1985 and 1986, Vaughan's personal and professional life collapsed. He was carrying around enormous amounts of cocaine in

canning jars, ingesting two eight-balls a day. His drug abuse got so severe that roadies had to find ways for Vaughan to access cocaine while on stage. Asked to perform the "Star-Spangled Banner" on opening day of the baseball season at the Houston Astrodome, Vaughan arrived in a stupor. He barely knew the song and performed a meandering version that evoked a chorus of boos from the crowd. Personal appearances became public embarrassments, often ending with an angry or incoherent Vaughan rambling in front of an audience. An old roommate, Tim Duckworth, was hired to take care of Vaughan 24 hours a day.

Vaughan's financial situation wasn't much better. Despite making more than \$20,000 a night, the band was losing money. His debts, old and new, were coming due, and his reluctance to pay them was driving a wedge between the band and management.

Back in Austin his wife Lenny, who was matching Vaughan's constantly irresponsible spending, was pushing for more cash. But Vaughan was nearly comatose most of the time and did nothing to resolve the situation. Frustrated and exhausted from trying to maintain the books and Double Trouble's lifestyle, Vaughan's manager, Chesley Milli-

kin, the man who had gotten Vaughan his break with The Stones at Dancetaria three years earlier, resigned. "I don't want to be the one to find you dead," Millikin reportedly told Vaughan.

At home, Vaughan found his house padlocked and the heat turned off. Lenny had been spending his money on drugs and other men. Their strained relationship collapsed. Despite Lenny's crazed attempts to get Vaughan's attention — such as showing up at shows and screaming at him from the side of the stage — they separated for good in mid-1996. Meanwhile Big Jim, Vaughan's father, fell ill. On Aug. 26, 1986, three days after a serious heart attack, he was removed from life support. Unable to help his mother or anyone else — including himself — Vaughan returned to his tour the day of the funeral.

Finally, even the music failed Vaughan. His live performances, once the one reliable part of his life, started tailing off. *Soul To Soul* had been a commercial and critical disappointment, and there were rumblings that Double Trouble was spent as a serious creative force. Unable to come up with adequate new material for a follow-up, the band fulfilled their commitment to Epic by releasing 1986's *Live Alive*.

Recording *Live Alive* was a disaster. Vaughan was in much worse shape than he had been during the difficult *Soul To Soul* sessions. Drugs had driven a wedge into the band, with Vaughan and Shannon's excesses increasingly alienating Layton and Wynans. The thought of months in a studio horrified all of them, so the decision was made to return to the band's roots: their live performance.

Ironically, it turned out, the band spent more time in the studio on *Live Alive* than any other Double Trouble album. Several shows were taped in Dallas and Austin, but the performances were so terrible that major overdubbing was necessary. The drum sound was so bad that Layton was given the Herculean task of re-cutting his part entirely on one song. Vocals and guitar leads were overdubbed, and then the bass and keyboards were fixed. After running out of their original studio time, the band spent extra time in studios around the country while on tour trying to refashion the overdue, over-budget project.

"By the time they finished the process," writes Leigh, "the only original tracks left

(Please see Stevie Ray Vaughan page 28)



(Stevie Ray Vaughan from page 26)

were the audience."

The album went gold but only reached #52 on the *Billboard* pop charts. One cut, "Say What?," was actually nominated for a Grammy for Best Blues Instrumental Performance. But the album was a personal and professional disappointment. Anyone who compares *Live Alive's* limp versions of "Change It" or "Ain't Gone 'N' Give Up On Love" to *Soul To Soul* can hear that the band was deteriorating.

Vaughan told the *Dallas Times Herald* that by then "I had a real clear understanding that I needed some help. I obviously couldn't stop by myself, and I pushed it to the point where I collapsed."

The nadir came in Ludwigshafen, Germany, on Sept. 28, 1996, in the midst of Double Trouble's tour of Europe. Talking a walk with Chris Layton and Tim Duckworth, Vaughan doubled over several times and started vomiting blood. After returning to their hotel — and downing a few shots of whiskey — he trembled, gasped for breath, and collapsed. Layton called for help, and paramedics took Vaughan to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with severe internal bleeding. Doctors in London, where Vaughan was transferred for treatment, said that all of the alcohol and cocaine abuse had torn his stomach apart. Unless he sobered up, they said, Vaughan would be dead in a month.

"It's the rock 'n' roll myth; let's face it, it's everywhere. It's cool to get high. If you're higher than somebody, you must be cooler." Vaughan later remarked to *Musician* magazine. "The same old bullshit. And I believed it... For the first few years, I didn't really feel better but I thought I was supposed to, and I floored it. And the more caught up in it I got, the more I started to believe it. By the early '70s or so, I didn't know how to do anything without it.... It got to where if I was awake, I was snorting something or guzzling something, and it got to where if I had to get up in a few hours, that was my excuse not to go to bed. It's a sickness."

Vaughan had come to understand how he had misinterpreted the blues. He was living the blues instead of singing them.

"I was drinking a lot and doing things to give me extra energy, then drinking to take the edge off. I realized you don't have to drag the bottom with your life. There's plenty of blues out there in the world without having to do 'em yourself."

Facing his own mortality, Vaughan sought rehabilitation. He checked into the Charter Peachford Clinic in Atlanta, Ga., in October 1986. After just over a month in detox, Vaughan faced the world, with the guidelines to the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous firmly in hand. He attended AA meetings regularly and started to keep a diary. He and Tommy Shannon — who entered rehab the same day as Vaughan — helped each other through the challenges of sobriety. Recognizing the need to cut himself off from those who encouraged his alcoholism, he left Austin and returned to Dallas. In February 1987, Vaughan finally ended his destructive relationship with Lenny by filing for divorce. He moved in with Janna Lapidus, a model from New Zealand he had met while on tour,

who provided comfort throughout his collapse and recovery. The passion with which Vaughan had once chased his vices found new outlets — his family, his music, and his sobriety.

"I feel so much better about life in general and myself, physically, emotionally, spiritually. The last thing I want to do is drink or snort anything or smoke anything," Vaughan told the *Dallas Times Herald*. "There's rough days, but there are rough days with anything, you know. But there are no problems with keeping going. I have more energy than I used to have.... I'm just about as close to a new person as I can imagine."

Two months after rehab, the new Stevie Ray Vaughan And Double Trouble returned to the stage for their first full-scale concert. If there was any doubt whether Vaughan had lost his talent, it was vaporized by the show he put at the Fair Park Coliseum, where he blazed through the set to the roaring approval of the crowd and critics. Double Trouble went on tour throughout 1988, then headed into the studio.

The result, 1989's *In Step*, was a stunning return to form. If there was a benefit to the pains Vaughan endured, it was that now, with those pains behind him and newfound clarity ahead, he could write music that penetrated even more deeply into his blues experiences. Vaughan also wanted to share his renewed dedication to spirituality and community. He brought back Bramhall to pen lyrics reflecting on Vaughan's past.

"We would sit down and talk about

where we were in life in general and what had gone on all this time and where we were at now," Vaughan told *Billboard's* White. "We would boil it down, and then we would write it down and see how it fit with the lyrics that one of us had put together already.... With the songs we were trying to show spirit, strength and scope."

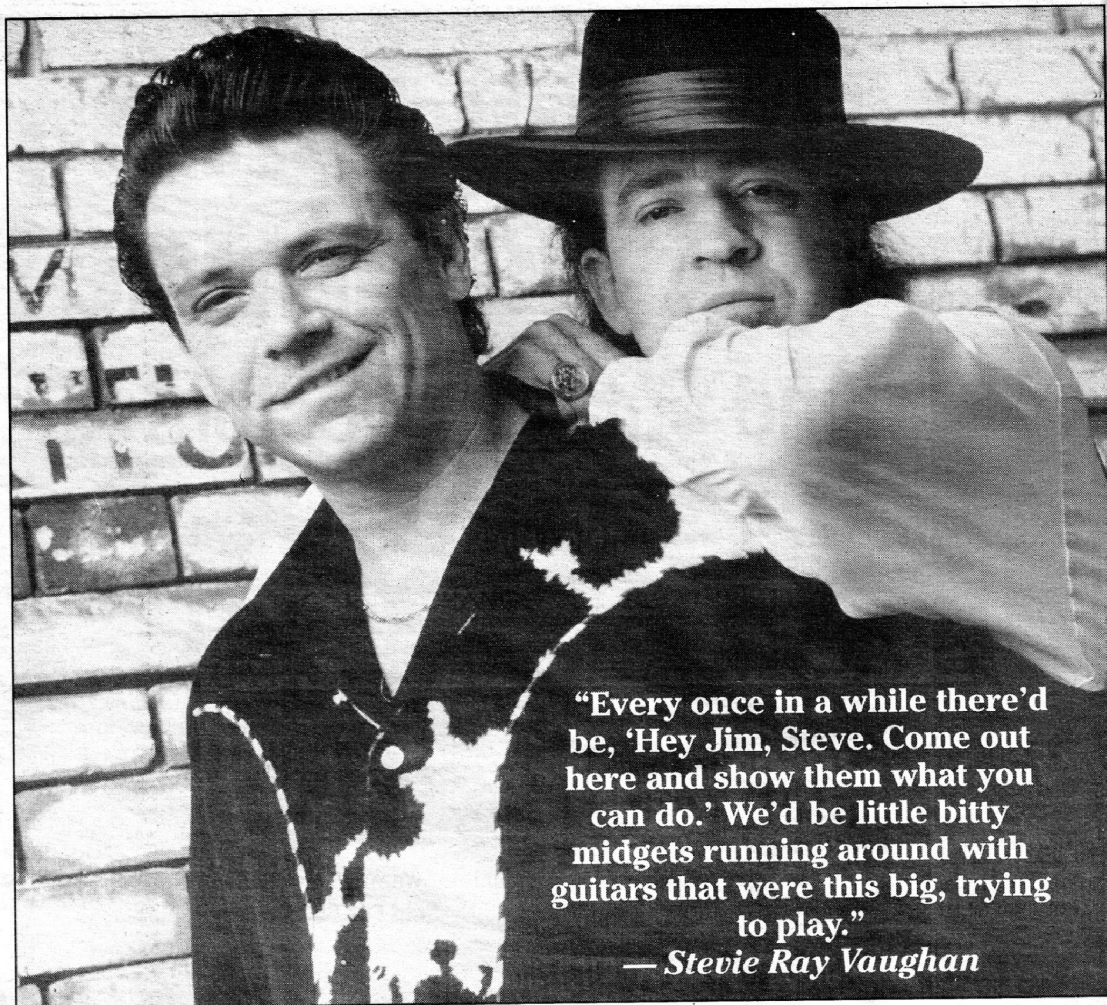
Harkening back to the formula they'd established on previous records, the album kicked off with perhaps Vaughan's finest scorcher, the party anthem "The House Is Rockin'." Having reassured his audience that sobriety didn't mean he lost his ability to have fun, *In Step* turned biographical. The #1 AOR radio hit "Crossfire" and follow-up track "Tightrope" were quite possibly Vaughan's finest moments on record, a one-two punch of top-caliber songwriting, guitar playing and singing — not to mention the funkier rhythm section Shannon and Layton ever provided. It was imbued with a personal history that can't help but resonate with the listener. Despite Vaughan's troubles, his singing had improved with each record of his career. But now he was truly confident, nuanced, and passionate, willing for the first time to let his voice instead of his guitar carry an album.

Maybe that was because he finally had something to say. Vaughan needed to testify and find redemption. "Crossfire" laid out a lifetime of late nights, ragged touring and nonstop partying: "Hurry here hustlin' there/no one's got the time to spare/Money's tight nothin' free/Won't somebody come and

rescue me." When followed with, "I need some kind of kindness/Some kind of sympathy, oh no," it became part AA platitude, part gospel call for community: "Tightrope," with its Booker T. And The MG's groove, got even closer to the truth. In perhaps the definitive verse of Vaughan's career, he and Bramhall wrote: "Afraid of my own shadow/in the face of grace/Heart full of darkness/spotlight on my face/There was love all around me/but I was looking for revenge/Thank God it never found me/would have been the end."

After grinding through magnificent covers of Willie Dixon's "Let Me Love You Baby," Guy's beautiful "Leave My Girl Alone" and Vaughan's own instrumental shuffle "Travis Walk," *In Step* returned to Vaughan's life with "Wall Of Denial." That song was the answer to "Ain't Gone 'N' Give Up On Love," the song on *Soul To Soul* that epitomized Vaughan's struggles. It is no coincidence that each song's opening verse opens with almost the exact same line: "Every tear that I've cried/Only washed away the fear inside" in "Ain't Gone" and "Never knew something so strong could be washed away by tears/But this wall of denial was just built on fear" in "Wall Of Denial." Once again, Vaughan was testifying to his sins. "We're never safe from the truth/But in the truth we can survive/when this wall of denial comes tumblin' down." Acknowledge your burden, he promises, and redemption will be yours. That place of peace was, perhaps, "Riviera

(Please see Stevie Ray Vaughan page 30)



"Every once in a while there'd be, 'Hey Jim, Steve. Come out here and show them what you can do.' We'd be little bitty midgets running around with guitars that were this big, trying to play."

— Stevie Ray Vaughan

(Stevie Ray Vaughan from page 28)

Paradise," the album's gorgeous, jazzy closer, where Vaughan finally perfected a song clearly beyond the blues idiom.

Village Voice music critic Robert Christgau summed up the public and critical reaction to *In Step*. The songs, he wrote, "fall into ex-addict jargon like it was natural speech, which for ex-addicts it is. If the music was preachy or wimpy this would be a disaster, but not 'til I perused the lyric sheet did I even notice where his homilies got their start."

In Step was also a commercial smash. Although it only reached #33 on the charts, it stayed in the Top 200 for 47 weeks and went double platinum. Vaughan's career, like his life, was reborn. Double Trouble's box office draw grew with each tour between 1987 and 1990. In 1989, he was named to *Guitar Player* magazine's "Gallery Of Greats," and in Texas at the Austin Music Awards, he won Musician Of The Year, Record Of The Year for *In Step*, Single Of The Year for "Crossfire," Record Of The Decade for *Texas Flood*, and Musician Of The Decade. At the 32nd annual Grammy awards, *In Step* won for Best Contemporary Blues Recording. Vaughan toured with his childhood hero, Jeff Beck. And finally, in July 1990, he completed a long-awaited album with his brother, *Family Style*, produced by his old friend Rodgers.

Vaughan was finally at peace when he launched his summer 1990 tour, co-billed with Joe Cocker. His personal life couldn't have been better; he had re-established his relationships with his brother and mother and was in love with Lapidus. His career was skyrocketing. The summer would end by sharing the bill with one of his idols, Eric Clapton, and perhaps his finest contemporary, Robert Cray.

The Clapton concerts were a convocation of blues royalty. Thirty thousand fans packed the lawns of the Alpine Valley Music Theater in southern Wisconsin each night of August 25th and 26th. The first night, Jimmie Vaughan, Bonnie Raitt, and Jeff Healey appeared at the end of the show for a jam session. The second night Guy showed up.

Vaughan's performance at Alpine Valley was spectacular the second night. He arrived on stage dressed in showman's digs much like the flashy outfits he favored some 20 years past in Austin. The band stormed through "The House Is Rockin'," "Tightrope" and Guitar Slim's "The Things (That) I Used To Do," then "Let Me Love You Baby" and "Leave My Girl Alone." After that, he stopped and dedicated "Riviera's Paradise" to "anyone who's had pain in their life. I wish and hope we all find the happiness we are looking for." "Superstition" by Stevie Wonder and "Couldn't Stand The Weather" led to the show's conclusion, when Jimmie joined the band for the last three songs, "Goin' Down," "Crossfire" and "Voodoo Chile."

Vaughan dominated the final jam session, "Sweet Home Chicago." Backing Guy's vocals, Guy, Clapton, Cray, and Jimmie took turns soloing before Vaughan stepped forward. Vaughan let loose passionate fury

Grammy winner killed in foggy Wisconsin crash

EAST TROY, Wis. (AP) — Grammy-winning blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan was among five people killed early Monday when their helicopter slammed into a hill in dense fog after leaving a concert, authorities said.

The other victims were three members of rock star Eric Clapton's entourage and a pilot.

Clapton, who played with Vaughan at the concert Sunday night, landed safely in Chicago on another helicopter. His publicist, Ronnie Lippin, announced Vaughan's death.

Lippin said there was no truth to

rumors that he had begged to get on the helicopter that crashed because it would arrive at its destination earlier. Clapton said the victims, who included his agent, bodyguard and tour manager, "were my companions, my associates and my friends. This is a tragic loss of some very special people."

The helicopter, owned by Omni Flight Helicopters Inc., crashed into a field shortly after leaving the Alpine Valley Music Theater, an open-air stage and ski resort near East Troy, 39 miles southwest of Milwaukee, said Omni spokesman Phil Huth.

Wreckage and bodies were scattered over 200 feet, authorities



Grammy-winning blues musician Stevie Ray Vaughan was killed.



Federal investigators look over the wreckage of the Bell helicopter that

TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 1990

THE POST-CRESCENT, APPLETON-NEENAH-MENASHA, WIS.

A-7

Vaughan's career had taken off

EAST TROY, Wis. — Blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan was riding a wave of Grammy-winning success after kicking drug and alcohol habits when he died with four others when their helicopter smashed into a hill after takeoff from a Wisconsin concert site.

"His death is particularly sad, given that he'd cleaned up and was playing the best music of his life," said Jeff Peterson of the "Austin City Limits" television program on which Vaughan appeared several times. "We'll miss Stevie and we'll miss his music."

Vaughan, 35, played his last concert Sunday night on a bill with fellow guitarists Eric Clapton and Robert Cray. After the performers and their entourage climbed into helicopters and took off for Chicago in dense fog about 12:35 a.m. Monday, one of the aircraft disappeared.

"We had four helicopters and Eric and I were in one directly behind it when it suddenly disappeared from vision," Clapton's manager, Roger Forrester, told Britain's *Sky News*.

The helicopter carrying Vaughan, the pilot and three members of Clapton's entourage wasn't found until about 7 a.m., after an emergency signal alerted authorities of the downed craft.

The crash left wreckage and bodies scattered over a 200-foot swath on the hill, authorities said.

Clapton, who had landed safely in Chicago on

another helicopter, said the victims, including his agent, bodyguard and tour manager, "were my companions, my associates and my friends. This is a tragic loss."

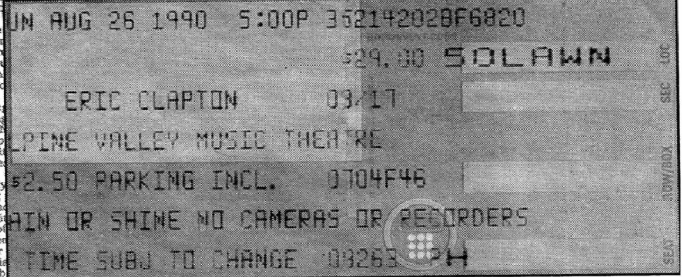
Vaughan overcame two Grammys in the decade from 1984 to 1990. He gained popularity with his guitar jams of music legends Albert King.

Vaughan soon collapsed during the concert. He told the police he was waiting for a call that he felt he'd be back in self-defense.

"I was nearly strange-looking. I was sitting and a lot better off with forward to rule with his older known music."

Thunderbirds to a spokesman in the records in New York, had cut visibility to below two miles.

Jimmie Vaughan was at the weekend concert, Schwartz said. Schwartz said Vaughan's death was ironic because



Plane Crashes Claim Lives of Famous Musicians

Many prominent musicians have met early deaths in air accidents.

- Aug. 27, 1990: Grammy-winning blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan, 35, was killed when a helicopter crashed into a hill in East Troy, Wis., after departing from a concert. Vaughan had a platinum album with his band Double Trouble in "Couldn't Stand the Weather," released in 1984. That year, he won a Grammy Award for best traditional blues recording for a song called "Flood Down in Texas." This year, he won a Grammy in the contemporary blues category for "In Step."
- Dec. 31, 1985: Rick Nelson died in a New Year's Eve plane crash near De Kalb, Texas.
- Oct. 21, 1977: Singer Ronnie Van Zant and some members of his Lynyrd Skynyrd band were killed in a plane crash in McDonough, Miss.
- Sept. 20, 1973: Jim Croce died in an air crash near Natchitoches, La., at age 30.
- Dec. 10, 1967: Rhythm and blues artist Otis Redding died in a plane crash in Wisconsin along with members of his band, the Bar-Kays. He was 26. His greatest hit, "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay," was released just three days before the crash.
- July 31, 1964: Country music singer Jim Reeves died at age 39 in a light plane crash near Nashville along with his manager, Dean Mansel, 30.
- March 5, 1963: Patsy Cline died in a plane crash near Camden, Tenn., at age 31. Also killed were Grand Ole Opry stars Cowboy



STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN is shown in performance Saturday at Alpine Valley Music Theater. Below, federal investigators look over wreckage of the Bell helicopter.

1,000 attend Vaughan rites

More than 1,000 mourners, led by Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne and Stevie Wonder, sang a bluesy version of the hymn "Amazing Grace" Friday in Dallas at a graveside service for blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan.

The singer's fans, some dressed in black, some in T-shirts from his concerts, and some wearing replica of Vaughan's trademark black fedora hat, stood in the sweltering heat for as long as three hours.

Vaughan, 35, died Monday in a helicopter crash in Wisconsin after a concert Sunday night with Eric Clapton and Robert Cray.

Above: Various newspaper clippings from the Appleton (Wisc.) *Post-Crescent*, the Minneapolis (Minn.) *Star Tribune*, and the Worthington (Minn.) *Daily Globe* as well as an actual ticket stub from the final concert.

Left: A statue of Stevie Ray Vaughan stands guard over Austin, Texas, the city that made him famous.

(Stevie Ray Vaughan from page 30)

so overwhelming that Clapton, who led the jam, cancelled the second round of solos and ceded the evening to Vaughan.

"He just sort of kicked everybody's ass and nobody seemed to fight back. Stevie was on a cloud or something," Jimmie recalled. In *Rolling Stone*, Mikal Gilmore wrote that "it was as if Vaughan had played all the way through his blues and was now striving to find what sort of music one could create on the other side — in short, what might result when one takes a music of anguish and lust and transforms it into a music of hope and determination."

An exuberant Vaughan went backstage and joined the other artists, who lavished him with praise while talking about the potential for turning the night into a full-fledged tour. But Vaughan was anxious to return to Chicago. With fog thickening over a muggy Wisconsin night, Vaughan persuaded his older brother to give up his seat on the first helicopter back to Illinois.

Vaughan hopped aboard the Bell 206 Jet Ranger helicopter around 12:30 a.m. on August 27, alongside the pilot, Jeffrey Brown, Clapton's agent Bobby Brooks, Clapton's bodyguard, Nigel Brown, and one of Clapton's tour managers, Colin Smyth. Less than five minutes after takeoff, the helicopter crashed into a 300-foot man-made ski hill. Everyone on board died instantly. Stevie Ray Vaughan was 35 years old.

As the news spread of Vaughan's death, voices from around the world came forward to share their memories. "He was a sweet guy," said Dylan, whose *Under The Red Sky*, featuring both Vaughan brothers, was about to be released. "Something else was coming through from him besides his guitar playing and singing."

Raitt said that Vaughan was "the most passionate blues guitarist alive. In terms of raw, tortured blues, for pure grit and power, I don't think anyone could touch Stevie Ray."

And B.B. King told *Rolling Stone*, "It's a



"It's a loss not just for the music — it's a loss to people as a whole. He was just such a nice man. I tell you the truth, it really hurts. The only thing that keeps me from crying is knowing the joy that he brought to us. I can see his smile right now, him sitting there with his Mexican hat on, going, 'Hey, it's all right.'"

— B.B. King

loss not just for the music — it's a loss to people as a whole. He was just such a nice man. I tell you the truth, it really hurts. The only thing that keeps me from crying is knowing the joy that he brought to us. I can

see his smile right now, him sitting there with his Mexican hat on, going, 'Hey, it's all right.'"

Texans mourned as well. Two days after his death, thousands of mourners converged

on the city's Zilker Park in 106-degree temperatures to eulogize the city's musical hero. On Aug. 31, 3,000 people showed up in Dallas for a memorial that included Raitt, Browne, and Wonder singing "Amazing Grace."

It was fitting that Raitt, Browne and Wonder honored Vaughan with a gospel, not blues, song. For while the blues was at the heart of Vaughan's music, it was gospel that had come to fill his heart. We will never know how Vaughan intended to reconcile the two parts of his life. But Vaughan left a tantalizing hint behind when the Vaughan Brothers' *Family Style* was released posthumously in 1990.

The album was like nothing Vaughan had ever released. It was as if he and his brother had returned to the childhood nights they shared in their bedrooms trying to play everything the radio and 45s could offer. It's a relaxed record, filled with bright sound, ably produced by old friend Rodgers. From the funk of "Mama Said" to the Memphis soul of "Hard To Be" to the "Wang Dang Doodle" tribute "White Boots," Vaughan's final testimony proved that his talents weren't limited to blues-rock.

Finally, there was "Tick Tock." With its swaying backbeat and calm, introspective tone, "Tick Tock" recalls the definitive song from the other great artist who died in a Wisconsin plane crash: "Dock Of The Bay" by Otis Redding. But "Dock Of The Bay," beneath its soothing melody, was pure blues. "I've had nothin' to live for/And nothin' gonna come my way," Redding sings, "And this loneliness won't leave me alone."

The Vaughan Brothers turned the desperation of Redding's song into the music of redemption, placing their faith in the future. Someday, as Vaughan sings, they envision that "people of the world had it together/Had it together for the boys and the girls."

Stevie Ray Vaughan left us too early, but when he left he finally had it together. For the rest of us, time's tickin' away.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN & DOUBLE TROUBLE Texas Flood (Epic 65870)

Couldn't Stand The Weather
(Epic 65871)

Soul To Soul
(Epic 65872)

In Step
(Epic 65874)

There's one point on the live bonus track, "Life Without You," included on the reissue of *In Step*, where Stevie Ray Vaughan stops playing and talks to the audience, "I'm gonna stop right now and thank God that I'm alive and well enough to be with y'all today, and that all is as well as it is with everybody here." A spine-chilling moment, to be sure. It comes near the end of the remastered studio album that includes such now-classic SRV cuts as "Crossfire," "The House Is Rockin'," and "Leave My Girl Alone." Like all four of the reissued albums, this one contains bonus tracks, previously unissued live tracks of "The House Is Rockin'," "Let Me Love You Baby," "Texas

Flood," and the aforementioned, "Life Without You." After hearing Vaughan sing his heart and soul out through 15 tracks, hearing his affirmation of life brings home the reality that Vaughan is no longer with us. It hits us with a genuine lack of subtlety, like a two-by-four across the face. Oh, Lord, Stevie, we just miss you old boy.

These four CDs would have made an incredible boxed set, but having the option of purchasing just your favorites is nice too. Although once you hear one of the discs, you'll find yourself craving the others like an alcoholic needing a shot of Jack Daniels.

Couldn't Stand The Weather is a lightning storm for the ears, bringing back cleaner than ever before recordings of favorites such as the emotionally charged instrumental, "Scuttlebutt"; Vaughan's take on the Jimi Hendrix wall of sound called "Voodoo Chile"; "Cold Shot"; and the infectious title track itself. All four discs feature a dialog with Vaughan, from *Rock Lives: The Timothy White Sessions*, and there are four unreleased studio tracks and alternate takes — "Hide Away," "Look At Little Sister," "Give Me Back My Wig" and "Come On (Pt.III)."

The remasters feature all-new, comprehensive liner note booklets and a sound quality that would rival that of any "gold

disc" release.

Texas Flood rocks once again with the bluesy title track, along with "Love Struck Baby," "Mary Had A Little Lamb" and what is commonly considered one of Vaughan's biggest hits, "Pride And Joy." There's an unreleased track of "Tin Pan Alley" and new live cuts of "Testify," "Mary Had A Little Lamb" and "Wham."

Soul To Soul brings home more of the best of SRV, with memorable songs such as "Look At Little Sister," "Say What!" and "Empty Arms." Bonus cuts include a medley of Hendrix's "Little Wing/Third Stone From The Sun," and "Slip Shidin' Slim."

Taken together, the four reissues of Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble's studio catalog, along with the bonus tracks, deal us 56 cuts, without a bad egg in the bunch. These reissues will stand as one of 1999's brightest musical moments and help to preserve the legacy of a Texas guitar slinger who was cut down in the prime of his life but managed to leave behind a collection of recordings that will keep listeners tapping their feet and smiling for many years to come.

— Michael B. Smith



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